

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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MARKEY: WHERE ARE THE KI GUIDELINES?

National Academy of Sciences panel report also overdue, Markey says

WASHINGTON, D.C. —Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Co-Chair of the Bipartisan Congressional Task Force on Nonproliferation and a Member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, today released a letter to President Bush questioning his Administration's commitment to prepare guidelines for the distribution and stockpiling of potassium iodide for the public:

"Potassium iodide can protect the thyroid from radiation-caused cancer, if taken at the right time," said Rep. Markey. "However, if you don't have your tablets, and don't know when you should and shouldn't take it, you'll never be protected. Last year, Congress directed the Bush Administration to contract with the National Academies of Science to come up with a report on 'the most effective and safe way to distribute and stockpile potassium iodide tablets on a mass scale.' This report was required to be submitted on December 12, 2002. However, not only have we not seen the report, the National Academy has yet to receive the funding to produce it."

An accident or terrorist attack at a nuclear power plant could release radioactive iodine, which is known, especially in children, to cause thyroid cancer. The Bioterrorism Act, signed into law on June 12, 2002, requires the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to pay for one or two tablets for every person living within 20 miles of a nuclear reactor. Also contained within this legislation was a requirement that, by December 12, 2002, the President, working with the National Academies of Science, provide Congress with a report on the most effective way to distribute and stockpile potassium iodide. The legislation also required that the federal government issue guidelines so state and local governments on the best ways to implement those plans by June 12, 2003.

Rep. Markey asked the President the following questions:

- 1.) Why wasn't the NAS panel selected in time to meet the December 12th deadline? When will the NAS report be submitted?
- 2.) What preparations is your Administration undertaking to prepare and issue the guidelines for KI distribution mandated under the Act?
- 3.) Who within the Administration will be responsible for issuing these guidelines, and what process will be followed in developing and promulgating them?
- 4.) What is the Administration doing to educate the public about KI and work with state and local public health and emergency response officials to develop policies and procedures for stockpiling and distribution of KI?

"We know that al Qaeda counts U.S. nuclear power plants among their targets for terrorism," concluded Rep. Markey. "Since potassium iodide is cheap, safe, and effective, why is the Bush Administration not moving faster to provide the proper guidelines to protect the American people?"

Copies of this and all other correspondence can be found at <http://www.house.gov/markey/>.

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